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HINTS

TO

THE AMATEUR GARDENERS

OF

SOUTHERN INDIA.

BY

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"He who waits for an opportunity to do much at once, may breathe out his life on idle wishes, and regret in the last hour his useless intentions and barren Zeal."

No. 5.

CALENDAR OF OPERATIONS.

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PREFACE.

It is with feelings of pride mingled with satisfaction, that reference can be made to the success of the former issues of this series of "*Brochures*," their circulation is probably unprecedented in the Gardening Literature of Southern India, above 2,500 copies have been circulated, simplicity of detail has invariably been attended to, technicalities in a language belonging to a race "long since swept from the face of the earth" have been avoided, the object of the writer being the imparting of instruction in a style that would meet the wants of all, to advance the *Art of Horticulture* in our "plain mother tongue," thereby avoiding obscurity in imparting that which is intended for instruction. As promised in the last issue, the importance of vegetable culture in India was to be resumed in No. 5, in order to fulfil this end the present No. makes its appearance as a Calendar of operations for the Kitchen and Flower garden, adapted to Madras, as the rain commences at different periods in the various districts, residents in which will find but little difficulty in adapting the following Calendar to their wants, by commencing their operations, with the setting in of the annual rains, or dividing the months into seasons suitable to the district, as shown at page 20, No. 2. In returning thanks to the public for their extensive patronage, the writer holds out no promise of these Pamphlets being continued, however unforeseen circumstances may induce him to do so, ? ?

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OPERATIONS IN THE KITCHEN GARDEN.

JANUARY.

As the weather during the month will generally be clear and dry, attention to watering is required, if possible water in the morning otherwise late in the evening, never water vegetables during the heat of the day. The sowing of European vegetables may now be discontinued, as in the majority of cases seed sown during this month will prove to be labor needlessly expended, they will not come to maturity, or scarcely to a state fit for consumption. Last month may be considered as drawing to a close all successful operations in regard to European vegetable sowing, with the exception of a few salads, which may be sown in beds, shaded and hand-watered, with attention they will produce small crops. During the first and second week is a good time to sow cucumbers, vegetable marrow, gourds and such like. Nepaul spinach should be sown and planted for a supply during the hot months. Attend to keeping the soil hoed amongst growing crops, eradicating weeds to prevent their seeding, which they now do freely, continue to earth up celery, choosing a dry day for directions as to *earthing*. See No. 3, page 38. Plant cuttings of the cabbage tribe in beds if rooted they will give a good supply of sprouts during the hot months. Sow country vegetables if required, remove all decaying vegetables to the compost heap. Look to the graft mangoes, continue every two or three days to deepen the incision till the branch is cut through. If any are entirely removed they may be planted without delay, taking care to support them against damage from high winds.

FLOWER GARDEN.

The flowers during this month should be in great perfection. The main operations consist in keeping everything clean and

in perfect order, using the knife amongst shrubs, &c., where required. Attend to the young shoots of creepers so that they may be properly trained, cut back all plants that may be growing over the edges of the beds or walks, this should be done neatly so that the use of the knife may not be discovered, nothing looks worse than plants abruptly cut round the hedge of flower beds. Such cuttings of shrubs, and roses, as are rooted should be planted out in beds, well watered, and shaded for a few days. Attend to plants in pots, roses in flower-bud will be improved by frequent watering with liquid manure, it will increase the size of the flowers. Shade tender plants from the midday sun, keep a supply of water exposed to the sun during the day, for watering potted plants in the evening. Attend to clipping hedges, keeping the walks and grass in proper trim.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is generally clear, rain seldom falls, dews are plentiful, vegetables are abundant towards the end of the month. Fruit, such as oranges, pomegranates, guavas, plantains, &c., are to be had.

FEBRUARY.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

As the Horticulture Exhibition is generally held during the early part of the month, attend to the schedule of prizes if you intend to compete, preserve such articles as may be required by marking them with stakes; in forwarding articles for competition pay marked attention to what is required, avoid sending vegetables of any kind in flower pots. In the garden little is required beyond the directions of last month, a few salads may be sown, country radishes, cucumbers and gourds may still be sown. Keep the garden clear from decayed leaves, vegetables during this month, especially the cabbage tribe give out a most disagreeable odour if left decaying. See that arrangements are made to keep up a supply of such country vegetables as may be required. Watering will invariably be

requisite throughout the month, plant out (if on hand) cuttings of the cabbage tribe. Attend to collecting manure for next season.

FLOWER GARDEN.

The directions of last month are suitable to this, little more can be done than attending to watering, and cleanliness, let plants in pots intended for exhibition be protected from the midday sun if possible. During the course of the month, remove and put in pots a good supply of verbenas and such like, to preserve them during the hot season. Attend to plants in pots, frequently stirring up the soil on the surface. If worms are troublesome, a little clear lime water used occasionally will remove them.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is clear and calm, dew every morning, rain seldom occurs if ever; vegetables and flowers, in most seasons are plentiful; fruit, such as sapodilas, mangoes, oranges, custard apples, &c., are to be had.

MARCH.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

As the cultivation of European vegetables will no longer give any degree of satisfaction equivalent to the expense incurred; it is not necessary to presume that by giving directions, success will be the reward of carrying them out. The heat is too great to develop seeds of northern climes, indeed it is mere chance to succeed in germinating and growing tropical seeds. Attention to the culture of such varieties of country vegetables as may be required is all that is requisite in cultivation, though the latter may be purchased in the market much cheaper than they can be grown in private gardens. All vacant spaces in the garden should now be dug, and thrown up in ridges (this is applicable to heavy soils) so as to expose the soil to influence of the sun during the hot weather. Where the soil is light let it be dug over level, collect manure without delay, if composed of heating materials it will require to be watered

and turned over frequently, be sure this matter is not overlooked, attend to watering lately planted Mango trees, untying the ligatures round the grafted parts, support the stems securely against high winds, store Yams in sand or dry soil.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Little can be done during this month, pay attention to cleanliness, watering shrubs, roses, &c., such beds as are empty should be neatly dug over; look to the roots of Dahlias, let them be stored in pots of sand, or the pots they were grown in if the soil is dried *they must be kept dry*, gloxinias, achimenes, and bulbs, require the same treatment, plants growing in pots should be placed if possible to receive the morning sun and shaded during midday.

Remarks.—The weather during this month is clear, hot, and very unpleasant, from the prevailing southerly winds, slight dew frequently. No rain falls during the whole course of the month; European vegetables are very scarce, dear, and bad in general; country vegetables plentiful, such as brinjals, radishes, greens, &c. Fruit none, with the exception of indifferent plantains.

APRIL.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

This month might be passed over in silence, as little or nothing can be done unless digging up any portions of the garden not attended to last month, this should not be neglected any longer. Cucumbers, gourds and melons may be sown during the month, they require protection from the sun until established. Attend to fruiting pines, if the crowns appear to grow too large let the hearts be taken out neatly, remove all suckers from the bottom of the fruit, after the fruit has swelled a good size, water should be sparingly applied as it tends to injure the flavour.

FLOWER GARDEN.

The directions of last month are suitable to this, little more can be done than keeping the garden clean and free of weeds,

towards the end of the month look well to the support of young trees, creepers, &c., as gales may be expected early in May. Prepare soil for plants in pots without delay; directions for compost, see No. 3; look over dahlia roots, &c., in case they are being injured by vermin. Roses in pots should not be excited at present, or they will be weakened.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is similar to that of last, wind changeable from S. to E. and W., dew is seldom seen. A few slight showers of rain sometimes occur; European vegetables are very scarce, native vegetables plentiful. Fruit, such as grapes, pine-apples, and some of the orange tribe are to be had. Plantains are plentiful.

MAY.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

During the month the land wind commences, much difficulty will be experienced in cultivating any but the common varieties of country vegetables, dig over any vacant spaces of ground no matter how roughly; prepare manure; repair and build water channels when required; make and repair roads and walks.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Now is a good time to put walks in good order and make others where required. If composts for seeds and plants in pots are not preparing, delay no longer, as they will be required in July. Wash all empty flower pots and order supplies of new ones, use every endeavour to put down the unsightly pots in general use—it can be done.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is unpleasantly hot from the prevailing land winds, in most seasons a few slight showers of rain fall, seldom other than country vegetables are to be had, with the exception of cabbage sprouts, which are hard and tough; mangoes and pine-apples are plentiful and cheap; flowers are scarce.

JUNE.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Although rain frequently occurs during the month, it is scarcely desirable to recommend the sowing of European vegetables. It is more requisite to push forward any new work that may be required, dig over and trench all vacant and new ground that may be taken in for cultivation. Be careful that a good supply of manure is on hand.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Preparing pits for planting trees and ornamental shrubs may be proceeded with, likewise the filling up of all hollows on the lawns where water accumulates during monsoon. Making new flower gardens where required, they should be proceeded with at once, it will save time when the gardeners are required for more active operations in July and August. Repair walks, and make new ones, see that they are broad and level enough for two persons to walk abreast upon them, there is no necessity to raise them up like ridges in the centre, if they are slightly convex to throw off the water, it is sufficient.

Remarks.—The weather during this month is similar to that of last; showers are more frequent; European vegetables are rarely to be had. Fruit is plentiful.

JULY.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Everything should be prepared during the present month for sowing seeds in August. If the weather is at all favorable, sow a small quantity of celery and parsley for early plants. Peas may be sown towards the latter part of the month, though with but slight chance of success in the generality of seasons, during the last week the levelling of the soil thrown up in ridges may be proceeded with. The manure heap should be in a fit condition for use.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Little can be done during the month further than preparation for the ensuing seed time, let composts be in a perfect state for use before the end of the month. Make up grass edgings with turf. Do not prune roses unless they show signs of growth, this can be easily discovered by the swelling and bursting of the buds, if they show such signs, prune and manure; though waiting till the following month, would be more judicious. Take care not to be carried into too active operations by a good shower of rain. Look to the roots of dahlias, gloxinias and achimenes, they may have commenced to grow, retard them as much as possible, but bring them to the light, as dahlias are very impatient, their roots should be divided towards the end of the month into as many divisions as possible with a sharp knife, having a shoot upon each division.

Remarks.—The rains of the S. W. Monsoon commence during this month in slight showers, the sky is very cloudy; rain is frequent in most seasons. Fruit and vegetables are scarce.

AUGUST.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

As imported seeds should now be on hand, let a first sowing be put in pots or boxes without delay. If the weather is favorable, successive sowings may be put in during the whole course of the month. Care must be takén that the soil is in a proper moist condition as described in No. 1, page 8. Guard against the ravages of red ants; be sparing of water to imported seeds until they germinate. A first sowing of peas and French beans may be put in, likewise carrots, beet, parsley and radishes; choose a dry day, sow celery in boxes or pots in rich soil mixed with well decayed manure, and a small quantity of powdered lime. The reason celery is so apt to run to seed, arises from inattention to keep up a constant luxuriance by

the aid of good manure, celery should never receive a check; of country vegetables, sow brinjals, gourds, cucumbers, roselles, greens, spinach, beans, chillies, snake gourds, &c., plant yams and Jerusalem artichokes. Attend to top-dressing asparagus beds, make a fresh bed of water-cresses in a shady spot near a well or tank where they can be easily supplied with water twice a day. Put in suckers of pine-apples; prepare stocks of mangoes for grafting. Let the garden soil be levelled, well-manured and dug over; make sure the manure is well-looked after and mixed with lime and ashes before using.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Sow seeds of everything that can be had most suitable for the climate, be careful how small seeds are sown and watered, read directions in No. 1, look to the roots of dahlias, gloxinias, &c., they should be set a-growing in good soil. If no plan has been definitely fixed upon to secure a good supply of flowers, now is the time to look to it, there is no time to spare; propagate verbenas by layers, sow holyhocks, phloxes, petunias, balsams, &c., increase your stock of chrysanthemums, by division, or fresh supplies, let the flower garden be well-dug and manured, dig and manure round the roots of shrubs on lawns, &c. Let a shaded piece of ground be prepared in which to put cuttings of roses, shrubs, &c., prepare pits for planting trees and shrubs, make them large and deep. Pits in the soil of Madras or anywhere should not be less than 2½ feet in diameter and depth. Too much care cannot be taken of seedlings, lest they get drawn during the dull days that prevail, expose them to the light and air as much as possible. Top-dress all plants in pots not intended to be repotted with fresh soil and manure, repot and top-dress roses in pots. Prune and manure garden roses and put in cuttings.

Remarks.—It were unnecessary to write these instructions if those for whom they are written do not carry them out during the course of this month. As success can only be looked for by close attention, next month will be of less avail

to have plants sufficiently strong to produce an early crop or to stand the heavy rains, and whatever complaints may have to be made anent the failure of vegetables and the display of flowers, in January and February, it can be ascribed to no other cause than neglecting to conduct operations at the right season and in a proper manner. The native gardeners are not so much to blame, as they in general go by the instructions they receive.

Rain is frequent during the month; country vegetables are plentiful; fruit and European vegetables are very scarce.

SEPTEMBER.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

This is a proper time to sow a succession of peas, French beans and spinach, they may be put in every week during the month, continue to sow vegetables of all kinds. Onions and Leeks in light rich soil in beds, protected from the rains by mats tied over moveable bamboo framework. Attend to the seedlings sown last month, some of which will be ready for transplanting. Knol-khol and cabbage, if any were sown early in July, will be ready for final transplanting in the garden, in beds or rows, let them be lifted carefully, disturb the roots as little as possible. Encourage the growth of celery by slight waterings of liquid manure, look after insects, a slight sprinkling of lime over and under the leaves will arrest their ravages, if not used let them be picked off with the hand every morning. Lime will in no wise injure the tenderest vegetation if slaked and cool. Native vegetables sown at the beginning of last month will be fit for planting out. Commence to graft mangoes, make preparations such as digging trenches, &c., to prevent the garden being flooded during the monsoon near at hand. Manure pine apples, remove the suckers and put them into root.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Petunias, holyhocks, phloxes, &c., &c., sown last month should during this be fit for planting out, choosing a dull damp day.

Continue to sow balsams, holyhocks, and all showy annuals, not neglecting mignonette. Balsam seed from Hyderabad is generally good, and from the cultivators there removing the lateral branches, they have acquired a peculiar upright habit, show about one foot of blossom in a column when well-grown. Attend to cleanliness and keeping the soil in flower bed open by hoeing (*the idea of seeing a Gardener sitting in a flower bed digging it up with a piece of bamboo is absurd.*) Prune roses if hitherto neglected, layer bud and put in cuttings of roses and such shrubs, trees and creepers as may be required. Sow seeds of trees and shrubs, where layering is required, attend to the instructions given in No. 2, page 16, put in pipings of carnations, picotees in boxes, filled with fine sand mixed with red earth. Let all creepers be neatly tied to the posts or trellises upon which they are trained, prune where required, prune and keep in proper form shrubs, &c., attend to cutting hedges and filling up gaps, casuarina hedges neatly trimmed would be much neater round flower gardens than unsightly bamboo trellises, it is astonishing they are not more generally planted, as they combine neatness with economy, are easily raised if the seed is not too deeply covered with soil.

OCTOBER.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Transplant all vegetable plants, large enough into beds or drills where they are to grow. Trenches should be ready to receive celery plants, shade if the weather is clear, look after tomatoes, onions, leeks, carrots and beet-root, let them be thinned out to proper distances from each other, the thinnings may be planted if required. Continue to sow a few varieties of vegetable seeds. Peas may be sown every week, let the drills in which they are sown be raised above the surface level; continue to sow a succession of French beans. Keep up a supply of salads, such as lettuce, endive, mustard, water-cress, &c. Finish early in the month preparations for planting out vege-

tables, do not trust till wanted as the soil may not be workable from rain. Let everything about the garden be neat and clean, eradicate weeds on their first appearance. If the weather during the month should prove dry, peas and the cabbage tribe will suffer much. A supply of water will be requisite to prevent the crops sustaining a check which would prove very detrimental. When water is applied let it be in the morning, very early, if possible, when it is cool, frequent hoeing up the soil amongst the crops will require to be looked too. If activity is not displayed during the early part of this month in forwarding operations, there is but little chance of success for the season. Take particular care the crops are not planted on the same piece of ground they were last year; alternate them yearly if possible. Graft mangoes, and plant pine-apples.

FLOWER GARDEN.

The operations of last month are applicable to this. Look after dahlias in pots, stake them and water occasionally with liquid manure. Plant out verbenas, heliotropes and all other bedding plants. Keep up a supply of balsams, cockscombs, mignonette, &c. Plant trees and shrubs, attend to training and pruning creepers. This is a good time to get roses, fuschias, violets, &c., from the Hills of Bangalore. Take advantage of dry days to cut grass, straighten and trim the edges of walks and beds. Give everything a neat and clean appearance. Protect all newly planted trees from wind. The best plan is, use three-tarred ropes for each plant, fix them to the stems, round which should be tied a piece of canvass to prevent the friction of the ropes from injuring the bark, tie the ropes tight to three pegs firmly driven into the ground at the proper distance from the plants. This is costlier than stakes but more permanent, and will protect the plants till properly rooted.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is generally wet, and stormy, more especially during the latter part of it. Vegetables and fruits still continue scarce.

NOVEMBER.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Few European vegetables will come to perfection if not fit to plant out during this month. Attend to transplanting seedlings, peas and French beans may be sown every week or ten days, the main crop must be looked for from seed sown this month as peas sown in December seldom succeed. Sow a small quantity of cabbage, knol-khol, cauliflower, tomatoes, &c., likewise a few salads. Cauliflower sown during the first week of the month if they are well attended to, flowers may be had during February. Attend to transplanting onions and leeks. Thin out turnips and carrots to proper distances from each other. Plant celery in trenches, look after all details, such as cleanliness, digging trenches to carry off the heavy rains, put in cuttings of cabbage sprouts for use during the hot season. Graft mangoes, put in cuttings of figs and vines. Plant onion bulbs for salad.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Continue to transplant seedlings into pots or boxes. Plant out annuals, verbenas, holyhocks, phloxes and ipomeas, if strong enough. Sow any flower seeds remaining on hand. Sow seeds of trees and shrubs. Prepare early in the month stations for ornamental creepers, and plant without delay. Attend to training creepers and pruning where required. Prune and manure garden roses and put in cuttings. In pruning, cut the old branches down to three or four eyes from the bottom. Topdress all plants in pot not requiring re-potting, protect tender plants from heavy rains, activity is required during this month to obtain a good supply of flowers during the three following months. The finer varieties of roses in pots should be re-potted if necessary, they require a heavy soil mixed with well-decayed cowdung. Support all plants requiring it from the high winds.

Remarks.—The weather during the month is in general boisterous, with heavy rains, the N. E. Monsoon continues with great violence. Vegetables and flowers continue scarce.

DECEMBER.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Continue to plant out and transplant into boxes all vegetable plants on hand during the first week. Attend to thinning turnips and carrots. Plant celery in trenches and earth up such as may require it. Keep the soil amongst the growing crops hoed, and eradicate weeds on their first appearance. Blanch lettuce and endive by tying up the leaves. Thin out the branches of tomatoes. Look sharp after insects amongst cabbage and cauliflower. Use slaked lime freely on all crops attacked: it will prove a beneficial check. During the month sow cucumbers, vegetable marrow, country vegetables for greens, &c. Early planted vegetables will be fit for use towards the end of the month. French beans and salads should be in abundance. Attend to staking peas, beans, &c. Continue to make up a manure heap for the ensuing season; let nothing be lost in the shape of vegetable matter. The main work of the month is attention to growing crops; look to early grafted mangoes; make incisions gradually on the branches above the grafts.

FLOWER GARDEN.

Plant out the remaining stock of annuals; sow a few holyhocks, amaranthus, &c. A last sowing of balsams may be put in. Sow convolvoluses of all kinds. Petunias for flowering during the hot months. Attend to dahlias and encourage them by frequent watering of liquid manure. Keep the flower beds and walks clean and neat; water and roll the walks towards the latter part of the month, it will give them a neat appearance, at the same time they will be more comfortable to walk upon.

Remarks.—The weather during the first two weeks is similar to last month, generally clearing up towards the latter end. Fogs are frequent; flowers still continue scarce with the exception of roses; vegetables are scarce; country greens, &c., are to be had in abundance; fruit, such as oranges, guavas and plantains are plentiful.

IMPROVEMENT OF NATIVE GARDENERS.

" *Ed. io ancho sono pittore.*"—" And I also will be a painter." " Such was the exclamation of a peasant as he surveyed one of Raphael's sublime productions," no doubt his imagination led him to consider that all requisites necessary to be a painter consisted in the possession of a few brushes, pencils and a yard or two of Canvas. Were matters rightly viewed, it would readily be discovered that the peasant mentioned above, is not a character of rare occurrence, dupes of imagination are very frequent with reference to gardening in India. The knowledge of gardening is pre-eminently a work of time, and the wonder is that its progress in Southern India is not of a more satisfactory nature, seeing so many have tried it. That a reason must exist for such a standstill state of matters as the *Art of Gardening* still presents is evident. And that it exists in the ignorance of the Native gardeners is but too plain to be denied. It is scarcely possible that Horticulture can be permitted to stand aloof from further progress; it being an Art, the furtherance of which tends to contribute so much towards producing a supply of wholesome food for human consumption. In Tropical countries above all others the cultivation of vegetables cannot be fostered with too much care, considering their value as an article of diet. The object aimed at in these remarks is not to expose the ignorance of the Native gardeners, but rather to give publicity to an idea, the object of which is the removal of the drawbacks that exist to the furtherance of Horticulture. It is evident the Native gardeners cannot be sent to increase their knowledge of Horticulture amongst the " musty cobwebs of college lore." Schools of Arts and such like are in operation, and why should there not be a school of Horticulture condncted by a practical Master. The expense would be comparatively trifling. A few acres of land conveniently situated for a good supply of water—where all the operations of a regular kitchen garden could be carried out. 18 or 20 youths *apprenticed* could be taught every

thing that is requisite to make them good and efficient in two or three years. The value realized from the produce, &c., would undoubtedly be sufficient to pay for the support of the establishment, with exception of the Master's salary which might be disbursed by Government. There are Horticulture Societies it is true, but any one who has paid attention to these institutions will find that in the generality of cases through the lapse of time, they direct their efforts away from the objects for which they were instituted. The idea of an institution for teaching gardening alone may be new in India, though it is the only plan that appears feasible, and by which a real knowledge of gardening can be imparted. It may cause a smile, *nay* it may even be laughed at, still it is not an uncommon thing to see the paradox of yesterday the truism of to-day, Steamers traverse round the Globe, Towns are lighted with gas, but who does not know that Lardner laughed at the one, and Davy at the other; there is not a doubt but that with fair attention and well directed skill, vegetables may be produced in Madras to please the most fastidious, but not until such time as the primitive *modus operandi* and the patriarchal prejudices of the natives are removed. If instruction is to be imparted it must be done thoroughly or not at all; and it will invariably be appropriated by the native if his eye can be fixed steadily upon the equivalent, for his gaining it, viz., Rupees, Annas and Pice. If that is not the goal which can be reached, few will seek instruction for the love of it.

The question may be asked how much instruction would you impart to the Native gardener? It cannot be answered better than by quoting an able writer on education; "As much as he can possibly attain—the more the better for himself and us all." Much may be done by personal endeavour guided with patience, forbearance, and good temper, towards forwarding the knowledge of the Native gardeners, but it is a long tiresome and tedious road, is there not a shorter?—*perhaps so!*